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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, September 17, 2021, at 10 a.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2021

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable ALEX PADILLA, a Senator from the State of California.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty Father, who sees the entire human family at a glance, we claim today Your promise in Philippians 4:19 that You will supply all our needs.

As our lawmakers seek solutions to complex problems, provide them with the wisdom they need to keep our Nation strong. Lord, bring healing to the sick, solace to the grieving, and strength to the weary. Also, supply our need for the blessing of Your continuous presence. Continue to stand with us in the shadows, guiding the events of our lives with Your merciful providence.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 15, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable ALEX PADILLA, a Senator from the State of California, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. PADILLA thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Margaret Irene Strickland, of New Mexico, to be

United States District Judge for the District of New Mexico.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GULF COAST HURRICANE AID ACT AND INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, just a few weeks ago, Southeast Louisiana was pummeled by Hurricane Ida on the 16th anniversary, to the day, of Hurricane Katrina's landfall. Ida knocked out power across the State, including the entire city of New Orleans and its populated suburb of Jefferson Parish. The storm brought intense flooding that took lives and devastated communities.

I have some posters to place here. This is of St. John Parish in LaPlace, LA, and this of Galliano. You can see both the flooding and the damaged housing.

Hurricane Ida struck Louisiana's shores as a category 4 storm, with winds as high as 150 miles per hour, making it the fifth most powerful storm to ever hit the United States. Ida hit just 2 days after the 1-year anniversary of Hurricane Laura, which at the time, on August 27, 2020, was the strongest storm to hit Louisiana in 164 years. Laura devastated Southwest Louisiana. So Ida hit the southeast, and Laura, last year, hit the southwest.

Unfortunately for my State, we are no strangers to extreme weather as

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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2020 set a record nationally for the most named storms in a single season, with 30, 5 of which hit my State. Last year, Louisiana's farmers also had catastrophic damage to livestock, crops, structures, and other things during unprecedented winter storms. In the aftermath of Ida, 29 Louisianans and 85 Americans total died.

Yesterday was the first day the number of folks in Louisiana who were without power was below six figures. Those in Lafourche Parish, lower Jefferson Parish, and lower Terrebonne Parish are estimated to have power restored on September 29. That is still 2 weeks from today and a month after Ida made landfall on August 29.

I will put up pictures now of Jefferson Parish and of Lafourche Parish. Again, you see flooding and damage, with power lines knocked down and lines hanging from the sky, it seems, but you can see the kind of devastation it did to electrical grids. Again, here is the damage widespread in Lafourche Parish.

By the numbers, FEMA has received over 594,000 applications for individual assistance, of which 285,000 have been approved by the Blue Roof Program. We call it that because, when the shingles are blown off your roof and sometimes the boards or the tin, tarps are placed over to keep the rain from coming through. So it is a measure, if you will, of how many people had significant roof damage, but this is an underestimate. The Blue Roof has almost 50,000 validated requests, and the National Flood Insurance Program has 10,579 claims. The Small Business Administration has 17,083 disaster assistance loan applications, and temporary sheltering assistance to almost 10,000 households with almost 29,000 individuals.

So, as Louisiana begins to recover, we need two things.

First, we need supplemental disaster assistance. By the way, this goes back to the 2020 storms—Hurricanes Laura, Delta, and Zeta. Just last week, the White House's budget office sent a formal request to Congress, acknowledging the unmet needs for these communities over a year later.

Now, recall I spoke to the blue tarps and how your shingles blow off or the tin blows off or the boards blow off, and you put on a blue tarp. If you fly over Lake Charles now, a year after those storms, you will still see blue tarps, which is to say homes vulnerable to a rain event like Hurricane Nicholas, in which rain continues to come through, damaging the inside of the house and making the home unlivable. Not surprisingly, many folks are not back in their homes.

It is time to pass the disaster assistance bill for Laura, for Delta, for the winter storms, and for Ida.

Second, we must also take steps to prevent this level of devastation in the future. Ida gives us a harsh reminder that we need to strengthen the infrastructure that protects us from the

worst of these storms, including improving highways and evacuation routes, hardening our electrical grid, and investing in flood mitigation.

Now I will put up posters of Larose, LA, and of St. Bernard. Again, this community is without power, and in this community, you can see the destruction done to port facilities.

The bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which awaits a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives, is a critical missing piece.

It benefits all States, by the way. The Presiding Officer's State has been affected by natural disasters. Resiliency money would really mean a lot in his State. It would mean a heck of a lot in my State. It would mean a lot in every State.

But to speak specifically of Louisiana, Louisiana will receive almost \$6 billion over the next 5 years for roads and bridges. That is \$1.2 billion more than we would ordinarily receive. There is an additional \$8.8 billion available nationwide for transportation infrastructure, including evacuation routes and at-risk coastal infrastructure grants.

In Louisiana, this money could help complete Interstate 49 in LaFayette, complete the segment in the south, and complete the segment in Shreveport, I-49, to give an unfettered evacuation route should a storm hit either New Orleans or the Bayou region. It also includes six-lane Interstate 12 through the Florida parishes, as we call them, and a new Mississippi River bridge in Baton Rouge. It should not take hours to go through a 10-mile—literally, hours—to go through a 10-mile stretch in the Capital Region of Louisiana when a storm is on its way, and there is a mandatory evacuation order.

Now, by the way, we know resiliency works. We know this investment pays dividends because the damage from Ida could have been worse. But George W. Bush made a commitment 16 years ago to build levees to protect Jefferson Parish, Orleans, St. Bernard, and Plaquemines Parish.

So when I went down to St. Bernard afterward—when I went down to Jefferson Parish recently, and I met with elected officials, one of them looked to the ground and said: The ground is dry. We did not flood. And we did not flood because 16 years ago George W. Bush said: We shall build a levee system. We shall build resiliency.

Now the onus is upon us to make a commitment to harden the grid, to bury the power lines, which not only protects Louisiana in a hurricane but Texas in an ice storm and the West from forest fires caused by arcs from utility lines to a dried-out forest.

In the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, there is \$26 billion specifically to strengthen our Nation's electrical grid and to prevent these sorts of widespread power outages and these sorts of natural disasters. This funding includes \$5 billion to enhance the resiliency of electrical grids from extreme

weather and natural disasters, \$12.5 billion to increase power transmission to maintain reliable access to energy, and \$9 billion to develop and deploy new technology to strengthen grid reliability and resiliency. Now, some of these pots of money are specifically targeted for States like Louisiana which have been impacted by federally declared natural disasters over the last 10 years. That is the way to build resiliency.

So my plea is that we cut politics and actually get something done for the American people. I was meeting with a parish councilwoman, Jennifer Van Vrancken, from Jefferson Parish, and she said: When we get to the point where we don't do what is right because of politics, our country will go down.

I said that to another group of people shortly after that, rock-ribbed Republicans—some of them wearing their MAGA hats—and I quoted Councilwoman Van Vrancken, and they all said: That is the situation we are in now. So my rock-ribbed Republicans were agreeing with the Republican councilwoman. But speaking more generally, if we don't do what is right because of politics, our country will suffer. We have got to get this bill done and put the politics aside.

There is so much good in this bill. There is flood mitigation dollars, coastal restoration dollars, permitting reform to get projects done early and on time, and I can keep going. But recovery is a two-pronged approach. It starts with aid, and it finishes with the bipartisan infrastructure bill, a bill that helps our communities rebuild from past storms and better prepares our communities for future storms.

My folks in Louisiana are strong. They are resilient. But we need the long-awaited supplemental disaster aid, and we need to build resiliency for the future. Both is how we prepare not just my State but our Nation. Let's finally get it done.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S. 2093

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw the cloture motion with respect to the motion to proceed to S. 2093.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. PADILLA. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ECONOMY

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am here on the floor of the Senate today to talk about our economy, talk about the new massive tax hikes that Democrats in the House of Representatives have now proposed to pay for the \$3.5 trillion spending spree that is called “reconciliation.” I want to talk about why it is bad for American workers, why it is bad for our economy, bad for small businesses, and bad for American families.

They call it the Build Back Better plan, but it is really tearing down what helped us to be better and what helped to make us a more fair economy and an opportunity economy, by getting rid of the positive aspects of the 2017 tax reform and tax cut legislation and, instead, putting in place massive new tax increases.

By the way, these tax increases go even beyond eliminating the tax relief that was provided in 2017. In many cases, it provides additional tax increases even higher than we had before 2017.

We had a historically strong economy leading up to COVID-19, in large measure because of this 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which focused on expanding opportunities for businesses to grow; for families to take home more of their hard-earned cash; and for the United States, as a country, to be able to compete globally. It made us more competitive.

As a result, before COVID-19, we saw record growth in jobs and wages. In February of 2020, as we were getting into the COVID-19 pandemic, we had 19 straight months of job growth and wage growth of over 3 percent annualized. For 19 straight months, we had seen wages go up every single month. We had wages above inflation for the first time really in a decade and a half in my home State of Ohio.

This benefit in wages went mostly to lower-income workers and middle-income workers—exactly what you would want. This follows a study by the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, or CBO, that found that 70 percent of corporate tax cuts end up going into workers’ wages—70 percent goes into workers’ wages and benefits.

So it all made sense. As we made America more competitive, as we made our businesses more competitive—small businesses and large businesses—what we saw was wages going up and wages going up for everybody. But, again, the highest percentage increases were actually among those who were at the lower end of the income scale, or middle-income workers.

During that time period, just before COVID-19 hit, we also tied the 50-year low in unemployment. We had 3.5 percent unemployment. We had historic lows in unemployment, by the way, the lowest ever for certain groups in our economy, including Black workers and Hispanic workers.

We had, in 2019, a median income for U.S. households that had the largest inflation-adjusted gain going back to at least 1967. So you had to go back to the 1960s to find incomes rising that much.

And before the pandemic, we had the lowest poverty rate ever recorded. So for the 60 years we have been recording the poverty rate in this country, it was the lowest it had ever been, going into the pandemic. That is good news. We should be celebrating that.

And, again, what Democrats are now talking about doing is going back and changing that very law by increasing taxes in a massive way that created so much of that opportunity.

Those 2017 reforms also helped the U.S. compete globally by stopping what were called corporate inversions that were a recurring problem during the Obama administration and during the first year of the Trump administration. This is where U.S. companies actually said: You know what, our tax laws are so bad in this country, we are going to invert, meaning we are going to become foreign companies.

So we had companies in my State of Ohio and other States around the country actually say: We are not going to be American companies anymore because we can’t compete with the Tax Code we have got here. We are going to become foreign companies.

A lot of us criticized that and strongly urged these companies not to do it, but the reality was our Tax Code was driving it; and that is one reason we changed the Tax Code in 2017, to stop this movement of jobs and investment overseas and to say we would rather have you invest here in America, and it worked.

Prior to that time, there was something called the lockout effect, where companies would keep their earnings overseas. They made money overseas, they kept it overseas, and they never brought it back to America. After this law, \$1.6 trillion in overseas earnings came back home to America to invest here and create jobs here.

As a result of these changes, by the way, the largest U.S. companies increased their domestic research and development spending—R&D spending—by 25 percent, to \$707 billion, and increased their capital expenditures by about 20 percent, to \$1.4 trillion.

That is good. We like that. We want more money to come back into America, invest in America, and increase research and development to make us more efficient and more technological and, therefore, more competitive and more productive. And we like the fact that there were capital expenditures going up because the Tax Code worked to create that incentive.

All of this should make it clear that the opportunity economy we had in those couple of years before COVID, thanks to the 2017 tax reform changes, largely worked for everybody. Workers took home larger paychecks. The average American family saved at least \$2,000 on their tax bill.

But this tax plan before us now would throw all that out. Again, it tears down what makes us better. The massive tax hike being pushed by President Biden and congressional Democrats would be the largest tax increase since 1968, and almost no aspect of the Tax Code is left untouched.

This include increases in estate taxes. Now, this is a problem because if you are a business and you want to pass along your business to the next generation, you got to be sure the estate tax isn’t so high that the government, in effect, has a confiscatory rate where you have to sell the business in order to pay the taxes.

Capital gains taxes go up. This is taxes going up on investment. We want to encourage capital gains because that is assets you hold for a while. We want to encourage more investment in this country. That creates jobs and makes us more productive.

It increases taxes on retirement accounts. It increases income taxes. It increases small business taxes. So if you are a small business owner in America, watch out. It increases corporate tax. We talked about how we lowered corporate taxes to make them more competitive, and the result was they created not just more jobs but higher paying jobs, and they brought the money back from overseas. And the list keeps going from there.

American workers and families will find themselves losing more of their hard-earned cash from all sides. Each of these proposed increases will be harmful. But as one of the people involved in the 2017 international tax reforms, I am particularly concerned about the effects of undoing the reforms we put in place there to make us more competitive, and, specifically, the issue of raising the corporate tax from 21 percent to 26.5 percent, as proposed.

Some, including here in the Senate, would like to raise that tax even higher.

What is the problem with that?

Well, it is pretty simple. Once again, America would have the highest corporate tax rate among all the developed countries in the world. That is not a good thing because it makes us less competitive. And it is about our workers. Ultimately, they are the ones who bear the burden, as we said.

At 26.5 percent, we would have a national average on the corporate side of 31 percent when you take into account the fact that we have State and local corporate taxes here. Other countries, for the most part, don’t do that. They have a Federal tax only. This means, again, we are going to have the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world.

By the way, our rate could also be higher than China. So it is not just developed countries; it is also countries like China, who we are competing with, that would have lower rates than us. It creates an unequal playing field and making it really hard—in some cases

impossible—for U.S. workers to compete against rivals in places like China, but also the European Union and elsewhere.

It also makes costly and complicated changes for U.S. companies to operate outside the United States, punishing American workers who have jobs here in support of those international sales. Remember, we are only about 5 percent of the global economy, and we are about 20, 25 percent of the GDP. The economic mass of our country is something that, you know, we want to grow because that creates more jobs here.

If you are a company in America that sells overseas, that is something we should encourage because it creates jobs here in America.

I will give you an example. In my own hometown of Cincinnati, OH, the Proctor & Gamble Company is there. They are a global company. They sell all over the world. We like that because it creates a lot of jobs in Cincinnati. About 40 percent of the jobs in Cincinnati—I don't know if they have maybe 13-, 14-, 15,000 jobs now in our area—40 percent of those jobs are there only because of the international sales. They support the international side of the business. So this notion that we are going to raise our taxes so high that you can't compete internationally because other countries have such lower rates that their companies are going to beat you in the marketplace every time, that takes away jobs in America. We want to be a country that does business overseas, that sells stuff overseas because that creates jobs here.

Under the Democrats' plan, investment in the United States will slow, and companies will begin, once again, saying: I am going to just become a foreign company. I hate that. We want more American companies here. They tend to take their jobs and investment with them when they do that, by the way, which makes sense.

As I said, according to multiple studies, including the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office here in Washington, it is the workers who are going to bear the burden of higher taxes in the form of lower wages and benefits and lost jobs.

There was a 2017 study by another group called the Tax Foundation that found that 70 percent of corporate taxes are borne by workers. It is no surprise, then, that the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation here in the Congress found that two-thirds of the Democrats' corporate tax hike would fall on lower and middle-income taxpayers, which includes the small businesses that file taxes as individuals.

Meanwhile, because of the huge tax increases we are talking about, companies are going to raise their prices. American families are going to feel the pain in the form of higher prices at the store, on top of the surging inflation we are already seeing, thanks to the Biden administration's spending policies they have already put in place.

That \$1.9 trillion, almost \$2 trillion in spending, so-called stimulus, that was one of the reasons, according to economists—right, left, and center—including Larry Summers, who is a prominent Democrat economist, that we see these huge inflation numbers, because when you throw that stimulus money out there, it increases inflation, which makes it more expensive to buy everything from gasoline to clothes and food. It makes the wage gains that we have been able to see recently much smaller than they would otherwise be because inflation is eating up those gains. So this is not what we want to do for our economy.

On the small business side, the vast majority of small businesses pay their taxes on their individual tax return. So about 80 or 90 percent of the businesses in Ohio or around the country don't pay their taxes as corporations. They pay their taxes as individuals. So think about the small businesses in your community. They are probably partnerships or what is called subchapter S companies, passthrough companies of some kind. They might be sole proprietors. But their tax bill comes due on their individual tax return. Unfortunately, the Democrats are increasing the taxes on those people too.

A lot of those people will be lumped into the expanded top bracket of the income tax code, and, therefore, they will be paying 39.6 percent income tax, plus a 3.8-percent surtax on small business income. So that takes them into a tax rate that is well above what they are paying now. They will be in the twenties now, and they will be in the forties under this new proposal.

You might say: Well, that is for people in the top bracket.

Well, those people in the top bracket are often small businesses. If you are a small business, all that revenue in the business is counted toward your revenue. You may take nothing out of the company. You may just take a dividend to just pay your taxes. That is what a lot of small companies do.

I grew up in a small company like that. You know, we would issue a dividend to pay the taxes, but our income included all the income of the company. And that is the way America works. That is the way our Tax Code works. Some have argued that it shouldn't work that way, but that is the way it works. So when you raise taxes on individuals, you are also raising taxes on a lot of these small businesses.

Adding to this, Democrats say they now want to eliminate the really important 20 percent deduction on qualified business income for small businesses.

So for all the passthrough companies in America, pay attention. You know, that 20 percent deduction that is out there, Democrats are now saying they want to eliminate that altogether.

That was designed to enable smaller businesses to be able to compete, to be able to have a level playing field be-

tween the corporations—the C corporations—that just tend to be the larger companies, and the passthrough companies.

Additionally, small businesses that earn over \$5 million will be saddled with an additional 3-percent surcharge under the Democrat plan. This means that so many of these small businesses that drive our economy, that are successful, that are employing so many people are going to have a harder time hiring workers or paying them competitive wages. Again, they tend to be smaller businesses, but they are the backbone of our company.

About half of the workers in America work for businesses like this. So they may be 80 or 90 percent of the businesses, but because they are smaller, they employ about half the people. But this is where we get so much of our innovation. This is where we have so many opportunities for lower income workers to get a start. This is where the American dream is found.

Under current policy, the Congressional Budget Office suspects that as the economy continues to recover from the pandemic, tax revenues will grow—and I quote them here—to “18.1 percent” of the economy, “GDP in 2022.” So next year, 18.1 percent of the economy will be tax revenues, and then “fluctuate between 17.5 percent and 18.1 percent” of our economy “through 2031.” So they are saying taxes as a percent of the economy will be somewhere between 17.5 and 18.1 percent between now and 2031, over the next 10 years; next year, 18.1 percent.

This is interesting because Democrats are saying, well, taxes need to be higher. The historical average is 17.3 percent. So the estimate from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office says we are going to be between 17.5 and 18.1, and next year, already, at 18.1 percent; whereas, the historical average is 17.3 percent. Even this year, as we are still recovering from the pandemic and tax receipts are less, it is expected to be 17.2 percent, based on the Congressional Budget Office.

So you have to think about this. Why is there this great urge to raise taxes right now? Why tear down what worked? Why put America in a position where we are paying higher and higher taxes as a percent of our economy?

Contributing to this revenue growth, the Congressional Budget Office projects that corporate tax receipts are going to climb to \$379 billion in 2023, or 1.5 percent of GDP. According to the Tax Foundation, this will be “a record high in nominal terms”—so that \$379 billion will be a record high in corporate tax receipts—“and nearly matching average corporate tax collections as a share of GDP” prior to the 2017 tax reform. So, again, I just ask people to think about this.

They say: Well, we need to tax companies more. Remember, you are taxing workers, according to the analysis of the Tax Foundation and the Congressional Budget Office. But, also,

those receipts are going to be at record levels and very close to, as a percent of the economy, where they were before the 2017 tax reform.

What we should take away from these findings is that the economy is growing as we come out of this pandemic. We know this to be true. We have known it for months, really.

The Congressional Budget Office projected way back in January that without any additional government help—no new COVID-19 packages, not including the \$1.9 trillion spending package that Congress passed in March—that the economy would fully recover by midyear. And they were right, even as much of that spending has not gone out yet from the \$1.9 trillion.

Payroll tax revenue has risen by about 4 percent, suggesting that workers are taking home bigger paychecks than before.

So the economy is beginning a nice recovery. We need it to continue. The last thing you want to do is to slap a bunch of taxes on the economy right now and have the economy go down and have workers, in particular, bear the brunt of that.

My question is: Why would you want to throw out a tax code that has helped fuel this unprecedented economic recovery we saw prepandemic and brought in more money in the process?

In 2017, with this tax reform, we helped usher in an economy powered by workers and powered by small businesses and powered by more competitive larger businesses. It wasn't powered by big spending here in Washington, DC. The results worked. It was truly historic.

Moving ahead, let's stay the course instead of hiking taxes and putting a damper on American prosperity and American opportunity for everybody to get ahead. A massive tax increase won't make us build back better. A massive tax increase will tear down what makes us better.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

FREEDOM TO VOTE ACT

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak in support of very important new legislation, the Freedom to Vote Act, that I introduced yesterday with the members of the Voting Rights Working Group assembled by Leader SCHUMER, which includes Senator MANCHIN; Senator MERKLEY, who is here with us today on the floor and who has been such a leader on voting issues, including the For the People Act; Senator PADILLA; and Senators KING, KAINE, TESTER, and WARNOCK.

The freedom to vote is fundamental to all of our freedoms. Following the 2020 elections in which more Americans voted than ever before, in the middle of a public health crisis, we have seen unprecedented attacks on our democracy in States across the country. These attacks demand an immediate Federal response.

The Freedom to Vote Act will set basic national standards to make sure all Americans can cast their ballots in the way that works best for them, regardless of what ZIP Code they live in.

I want to thank Senator SCHUMER for his leadership in pulling together our working group that got this legislation across the finish line and, as I mentioned, Senators MERKLEY and MANCHIN for their work on this crucial bill.

It has been over 8 months since that violent mob of insurrectionists stormed through this very spot and desecrated our Capitol, the temple of our democracy. They opened the desks in this Chamber. They got up and sat at that desk where you are sitting now, Mr. President. It was an attack on our Republic.

And as I said from the inaugural stage just 2 weeks later under that beautiful blue sky, at the very place where you could still see the spray paint at the bottom of the columns and the makeshift windows behind us, "This is the day our democracy picks itself up, brushes off the dust, and does what America always does: goes forward as a nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

We took back our democracy that day with Democrats, Republicans, and Independents all sitting at that platform, seeing a new President and Vice President be inaugurated. We took back our democracy that day, and we will take it back this day with this new bill, with the support of 78 percent of Americans who favor 2 weeks of early voting, a very important provision in this bill, and 83 percent of voters who support public disclosures of all contributions. We will take it back again from those who are trying to take away people's constitutional right to vote.

With over 400 bills introduced in nearly every State to limit the freedom to vote, we can't simply sit back and watch our democracy be threatened again. Whether it is threatened with bear spray and crowbars and axes or long lines or the elimination of ballot boxes or the secret money, it is still under siege. When we are faced with a coordinated effort across the country to limit the freedom to vote, we must stand up and do what is right.

Sometimes people say: What is going on? It worked so well during the pandemic, during a public health crisis. More people voted than ever before.

Well, that is because they voted by mail. That is because some States, both blue States and red States, changed their laws to make it easier to vote, while still protecting the sanctity of the vote.

So why is this happening? Well, I think our colleague Senator Rev. RAPHAEL WARNOCK put it best when he said: "Some people don't want some people to vote." We will not stand for that because that is not how a democracy works.

Leader SCHUMER has said he will bring this new bill to a vote as soon as

next week because we know our democracy cannot wait. This bill builds on the framework put forward by Senator MANCHIN in June and includes many of the key reforms in the For the People Act, guaranteeing all Americans, as I noted, access to at least 15 days of early voting, including weekends.

Look at what just happened in Georgia. We just had a field hearing down there with the Rules Committee. In Georgia, all of a sudden they passed a law that says, yeah, you can vote on weekends early on, but when it counts in a runoff period, in those last 28 days, you can't vote on weekends anymore. That is only done for one reason: to make it harder for people to vote. That is why this bill is so important.

What else does it do? It ensures that all voters can cast a mail-in ballot and makes it easier to register to vote. That is pretty important as we see Republican, Democrat, and Independent voters all across this country wanting to be able to cast mail-in ballots. It is the safest way for so many of them to vote, even today.

Some States even required them to get a notary signature in the middle of a pandemic, through a glass window, when they were in the hospital. You wonder why we want to have some Federal minimum standards in place.

What else? Increased transparency through the DISCLOSE Act. I already noted that over 80 percent of people in this country want to see that, whether they are Democrats, Republicans, or Independents. It would require super-PACs and issue advocacy groups to disclose donors who contribute more than \$10,000 and stop the use of transfers between organizations to cloak the identity, to hide the identity of the source of those contributions.

It would counter partisan interference in election administration and protect election officials because not only do we need to make sure people can vote, we need to make sure their vote is counted.

It would prevent voter purges by requiring States to use objective and reliable evidence to remove voters and prohibit the targeting of voters solely because they haven't voted recently, while giving election administrators flexibility to remove voters based on State records.

As Stacey Abrams has said, if you don't go to a meeting for a while, do you lose your right to assemble? No, you don't. If you don't go to a church or a synagogue or a mosque for a while, do you lose your right to exercise your right to religion? No, you don't. You shouldn't lose your right to vote.

It would also prohibit partisan gerrymandering, this bill will, so that voters choose their elected officials, not the other way around.

Now, my home State of Minnesota is a great example of how this can all work. When you make it easier for people to vote, they will vote. I never see this as a partisan issue.

In election after election, our State leads the Nation in voter turnout because we have things like, now, no-excuse voting by mail or 46 days of early voting. Our bill doesn't go that far because we are setting minimum standards, but that is what we have in our State—and same-day voter registration.

And what has happened as a result? High voter turnout every time. Whom have we elected? Well, we have elected Democratic Governors like our Governor, Tim Walz; we have elected Republican Governors like Tim Pawlenty; and we have elected Independents like Jesse Ventura. But what have I noticed? People feel like they are part of the democracy because we make it easier for them to vote.

These policies that ensure Minnesotans continue to hold the coveted title of first in voter turnout—very close to the Presiding Officer's State of Colorado—are overseen by our secretary of state, Steve Simon, who continues to push for improvements in our elections.

The freedom to vote is fundamental to all our freedoms. Protecting it has not always been easy. Throughout our country's 245-year history, we have had to course correct and take action to ensure that our democracy for the people, by the people actually lives up to its ideals.

Voting is how Americans control their government and hold elected officials accountable. It was the founding principle of our country, and it has stood the test of wars, economic strife, and a global pandemic. But as we have seen in States like Georgia, Florida, Iowa, Montana, and most recently Texas, we are up against a coordinated attack aimed at limiting the freedom to vote. This demands a Federal response.

And the Constitution could not be clearer. It says right there that Congress can make or alter laws regarding Federal elections.

Just last week, legislation in Texas was signed into law that makes it harder to vote, and many States already are underway drawing new congressional maps. Without this bill, there will be nothing to limit many States from drawing gerrymandered maps that will distort the voices of Americans not just for 1 year but for the next decade.

The urgency for a Federal response is why, as chairwoman of the Senate Rules Committee, I have worked to ensure that voting rights are a priority. It is why one of our first hearings this year was on the For the People Act and why—and I see Reverend Warnock here—we took the Rules Committee on the road to Georgia in its first field hearing in 20 years.

And just last month, Senator BALDWIN and I held a roundtable discussion in Wisconsin on what has been happening in that State and what would have been put into law, including only having one ballot dropoff box in the en-

tire city of Milwaukee if the Governor hadn't stood in and vetoed it.

And we are not done yet because these discussions with voters are the most pressing testament that the threat to the freedom to vote is very real and affecting people of all walks of life across the country. We can't sit back idly and watch our democracy be threatened. As President Biden said in Philadelphia, the fight to protect the right to vote is the "test of our time."

Americans have fought and died to protect this freedom, and 56 years after the Voting Rights Act was passed by this Chamber and signed into law, we are still continuing this fight.

We have asked our colleagues from the other side of the aisle to join us on this bill. We have made many, many, many changes to this legislation in response to concerns they have raised, in response to concerns Senator MANCHIN raised, in response to concerns that secretaries of state have made across the country. We have adapted this bill to make it much easier to implement in rural areas, in small towns.

We are proud of this legislation. Yet what do we hear from the other side of the aisle? Well, over the last few months, one of their refrains which I find so amusing is they say this will somehow result in chaos. Truly?

Chaos is a 5-hour wait to vote in the Sun in Georgia without food or water. Chaos is purging eligible voters from voter rolls and prohibiting mail-in ballot drop boxes and having only one in the entirety of Harris County in Texas for 5 million people. Chaos is voters in Wisconsin waiting in line to vote for hours in the rain, wearing homemade face masks and plastic garbage bags. That angry mob on January 6 that came right into this Chamber, that was chaos.

You want to stop the chaos: Federal minimum voting standards. Telling extremists they can't spend millions on sham audits, that stops the chaos. Getting dark money out of our politics, that stops the chaos. And making sure that people have a voice by ending partisan gerrymandering, that stops the chaos.

So, once again, I urge my Republican colleagues to recognize the work being done in many of their own States to restrict the freedom of Americans to exercise their sacred right to vote. Our Nation was founded on the ideals of democracy, and as we have seen for ourselves in this very building, we cannot afford to take it for granted.

We have so much work to do. Voting rights reform, this bill, guaranteeing the freedom to vote, is about the salvation of our very democracy. I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting the Freedom to Vote Act.

Mr. President, I see my colleagues. Senator MERKLEY, such a great leader on the For the People bill, and Senator WARNOCK, such a great leader, new in the Senate but already establishing himself across the country and in Georgia as a leader on voting rights, are both here.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I so much appreciate the words of my colleague from Minnesota, who has brought the Rules Committee to bear in a maximum capacity to fight to defend the freedom to vote for all Americans.

When I was in high school, I had the opportunity to live in West Africa under a dictatorship as an exchange student. And in that country, the military dictatorship would exist until there was a new military coup, and then there would be another military dictatorship. And that happened time after time after time.

So, as a 16-year-old, I saw the contrast between a nation where citizens had no voice in the future of their country versus the United States of America, where the foundation of our Republic, the core vision of our Nation is that each citizen has the opportunity to participate, to fight to help shape the American dream, the path into the future, to the benefit of a better nation.

President Johnson noted that the ballot box is so essential that "the vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised . . . for breaking down injustice." Really, that ballot box is the pulsating heart of our democracy.

President Lincoln, when he was speaking at Gettysburg—speaking that the soldiers who died there did not die in vain because they fought to preserve the vision of government of, by, and for the people, that it shall not perish from this Earth. Well, it is the vote that preserves the vision of government of, by, and for the people. It is free access to the ballot box.

Over the course of our history, we have sought to fulfill that vision through the 13th and 14th Amendments, through the 15th Amendment, through the Voting Rights Act of 1965. But here we find, at this moment in our history, the right to vote is under attack once again. Some 18 States have passed some 30 laws trying to target specific groups of individuals and prevent them from being able to vote. These strategies in State after State are to make it harder to vote and easier to cheat.

Well, I will tell you what this bill does that we are talking about today, the Freedom to Vote bill. It makes it easier to vote and harder to cheat. It takes on three key forms of corruption that are haunting our election system.

First, it takes on dark money—dark money unleashed by Citizens United that allows billionaires to buy elections around this country.

Do a poll of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents and ask "Should we have this dark money, source unknown, haunting our election system, producing all of those attack ads, and you have no idea where they came from?" and citizens of every political stripe will say "Absolutely not."

Dark money, the hidden manipulation of the elections by the powerful—buying these vast sets of television ads, trying to destroy the character of candidates in order to manipulate the outcome—should not exist. It is in the DNA of Americans that this is a corrupting force. Well, this bill takes on the dark money.

The second thing that it takes on is gerrymandering. Gerrymandering is where districts are drawn to favor one political party over the other. Ask Americans across this country “Is it right that politicians should choose their voters rather than voters choosing their politicians?” and they will say “No.” Ask if they believe in the vision of equal representation as a key to a just society, and they will say yes. They want equal representation. Republicans say yes. Democrats say yes. Independents say yes.

This bill takes on gerrymandering and puts an end to it with national standards for redistricting.

Now, let’s turn to the ballot box. I never thought I would live to see the day that we go into a time machine and return to before 1965, in which one of the two parties is determined to block targeted groups from voting—to target Black Americans from voting, Hispanic Americans from voting, low-income Americans from voting, college students from voting. This is completely un-American. This is racist. It is a past that we had proudly put behind us, but this bigoted past has arisen to haunt us once again in these some 30 laws in some 18 States, targeting specific groups of Americans.

This bill says that strategy of cheating on election day by trying to block targeted groups from voting will not stand. We will make it easier to register. That is what this bill does. We will make it easier to vote before election day to undermine those election-day shenanigans. We will have 15 days of early voting. We will have the opportunity for voting by mail. We will make sure that our I.D. laws are not used in a fashion to favor one party over the other. These are core protections against these strategies designed to disenfranchise Americans and manipulate the outcome of elections.

I will tell you what else this law does. It takes on election subversion. We have seen strategies of election subversion in many of those State laws. So this bill says: You know what. No, you cannot have frivolous challenges where one person stands at a poll and challenges the legitimacy of every single person who comes into that poll place in order to make it hard for people in a certain location to vote.

It protects election officials from improper removal. It protects election workers from intimidation and harassment. It preserves election records so they cannot be manipulated. It guarantees that we have paper ballots that can be recounted. It prevents observer interference in the elections. It makes sure that people in line, if something

terrible should happen and those lines are long, will still be able to have access to water and food, which is a strategy that has been now employed by several States, to say: You know what. On election day, we are going to make sure targeted precincts have long lines, and then we are going to say you can’t even get a sip of water from a friend in that line, in order to try to stop people from voting.

Wow—the lengths these Republican house, statehouse, and State senators and Governors are going to stop people from voting. We have seen the strategies in the past. We have seen eliminating the number of precinct voting locations to make it harder for targeted areas to vote. We have seen locating them in new locations to confuse people. We have seen false information put out about where the locations are to make it harder to vote. We have seen the understaffing of key places to create long lines. Well, early voting, vote-by-mail, and protections in this bill stop these efforts to cheat in elections across our country.

So we are defending that most powerful instrument ever devised by human beings for breaking down injustice with this Freedom to Vote bill. We are defending the right of every American to cast a ballot. We are fighting against the big three corruptions infesting, if you will, our election system across the country. This should be passed 100 to 0.

I invite my Republican colleagues to remember the oath they took to the Constitution and to remember that the right to vote is at the very heart of that Constitution and join us in these core protections and to pass the Freedom to Vote Act on the floor of the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, I am proud to stand on the Senate floor today with my colleagues Senator KLOBUCHAR and Senator MERKLEY in support of the new Freedom to Vote Act that we just introduced. I want to talk about why it is so important, so urgent that Congress act right now to protect the sacred right to vote that is under assault across our Nation, but first I want to thank my friends who worked with me to get us to this point: Senator KLOBUCHAR, who has worked on this issue for so long; Senator MERKLEY also; Senator MANCHIN; and Senators SCHUMER, PADILLA, KAINE, KING, and TESTER. Our work is a testament to Democrats’ commitment to protecting access to the ballot box for every eligible voter.

I think it is important to remind us that we were blocked from debating this issue in June. It bears repeating so that the American people understand that that is what got stopped in June—not the actual bill but the ability to debate the bill on the Senate floor. But I am proud that our group was able to come together. We decided that we were not about to let this fight to protect voting rights die in this Congress.

Passing voting rights is the most important thing we can do in this Congress because if we are going to lengthen and strengthen the cords of our democracy, that won’t just happen. We will have to work for it. We will have to fight for it. We will have to stand up for it. And that is what we intend to do.

That is why we worked on this bill through the negotiations on the bipartisan infrastructure deal. That work is very important. I have often said regarding our infrastructure work that America needs a home improvement project; that that work is not only an infrastructure bill, it is a jobs bill desperately needed. We have to build back better and create infrastructure so that families can thrive, so that workers can be engaged in the work that grows our economy, creates more jobs. But even while that work was going forward during the August recess, we were focused on writing this bill.

The Freedom to Vote Act will improve access to the ballot for all eligible Americans by setting national standards for absentee voting, early voting, and in-person voting. It will make sure that the drop box is available for workers. It will enable the work that is so necessary to strengthen our democracy.

This bill will end partisan gerrymandering—yet another way in which the voices of ordinary people are squeezed out of their democracy—and it will advance commonsense reforms to secure our elections.

I am especially proud that this bill specifically addresses the wave of voter suppression laws we have seen take root in my home State of Georgia and all across this country since January. What kind of Congress would we be if we did not respond to all of these voter suppression bills that are mushrooming all over the country; a violent insurrection on this very Capitol, driven by the Big Lie, metastasized into a kind of voter suppression cancer all across the body politic?

This is our moment, and this is the work that we must do. So I am proud that this bill includes provisions from my Preventing Election Subversion Act that will prevent what we are seeing in places like Fulton County, GA, right now, where partisan actors will interfere with the work of local officials, taking over the election, subverting the will of the people even while the votes are still being cast.

It will also prevent a neighbor from leveraging baseless challenges to a voter’s ability to cast a ballot and have it counted. Imagine that. And that is one of the provisions in SB 202 down in Georgia. Your neighbor can decide to challenge countless numbers of people and their right and legitimacy in casting their ballots—tie up the whole system with these kinds of baseless accusations. How will it be possible to certify any election?

Simply put, the Freedom to Vote Act is all about securing our elections and

making the ballot box accessible so that every eligible American can exercise that basic right, the right to vote, no matter where they live.

As we do this work, as challenging as it is, as disappointing as it was to have our beloved colleagues on the other side of the aisle block debate, I am not discouraged in this moment. I am encouraged by the voices and the legacy of those who committed to the idea of freedom.

John Lewis was my parishioner, and although he has transitioned to eternity, his advice still echoes in the Halls of this Congress.

Every Member of this Chamber ought to be able to get behind voting rights. It is the only reason we are here in the first place. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will cosponsor and support the Freedom to Vote Act.

I look forward to talking with Democrats and Republicans about how we can get this done while we continue working on economic and infrastructure packages, because we have to walk and chew gum at the same time. We have to repair our country's infrastructure, but we also have to protect and repair the infrastructure of our democracy. It is not either/or; it is both/and.

We have always had infrastructure. We have always had roads and streets—important. We have always had bridges. John Lewis walked across a bridge in order to repair the infrastructure of our democracy, a bridge to the future.

I know that some of my friends on the other side of the aisle are already saying that they are not going to support this bill, but in the past, I remind them, voting rights legislation has passed out of this Chamber with strong bipartisan support.

I hope that this day will be no different. I say, at least give this bill a chance. Come, let us reason together. Let's talk about it. Let's have the voting rights discussion that we didn't have in June. It is not too late. Let's have the discussion that the American people deserve. Let's have an open debate and input from both sides here on the floor of the U.S. Senate. That is why we were sent here.

There is a lot for my Republican friends to like in this bill. My Democratic colleagues and I stand ready to hear what you don't like. Together, we can try to find common ground. I hope my Republican friends will give this bill fair consideration and that we can get bipartisan support to get it over the finish line.

Mr. President, as I close, I want to remind all of us that the only reason we are here in this Chamber at all is because somebody voted for us. Voting rights is not just some other issue alongside other issues. It gets to the heart of who we are in the first place—a democracy. We will always disagree about a whole range of issues, but after politicians have argued their case about infrastructure, about taxes, about healthcare, about national secu-

rity, the most powerful words ever uttered in a democracy are “the people have spoken.” Shame on us if we allow the people's voices to be silenced in this Chamber.

Voting rights are preservative of all other rights, and right now the right to vote is under attack. Our democracy is in a 9–1–1 emergency, and we must act now.

I know that for those who have been in this body for a while, there is a sense in which you know you offer up proposals and they don't always make it and you live and you fight another day.

When I look at what is going on across our country, I think that if we don't address what is happening right now, we will cross a Rubicon that imperils our democracy for years to come.

I am not about to sit here silently and allow that to happen. Too many people died. Too much blood was shed. Too many sacrifices were made. Too much is at stake, and it is beneath the legacy of the greatest deliberative body on the planet to refuse to even have a debate about voting rights.

I hope that my beloved colleagues on the other side of the aisle will come and reason together. Let's pass this out of this Chamber with strong support. We got some things done this year, but I believe that if we don't pass voting rights, history will rightly judge us harshly.

Folks who sent us here are counting on us. History is waiting on us. Our children are watching us. And the great cloud of witnesses—John Lewis; a white woman named Viola Liuzzo, who died fighting for voting rights; Abraham Joshua Heschel; Medgar Evers—a great cloud of witnesses are urging us on to march toward the mark of the High Calling, the High Calling about our democratic ideals, a nation where every voice is heard and every vote counts.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I am very proud to stand with my colleagues on the floor to talk about the Freedom to Vote Act. I was proud to work with my colleagues over many months—really, my purpose beginning in May—to help negotiate the bill to a place where it could do what needs to be done to accomplish the objectives my colleagues have described so well.

I want to offer just a few words from the heart about why I am so impassioned about getting this bill done. By my count, there have been 1,994 people who have served in the U.S. Senate—1,994.

One hundred of us share a unique experience. One hundred of us were here on the only day in the history of this body when we were attacked by violent insurrectionists attempting to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power. So from whatever State we represent or whatever our background, we are unified in having shared an experience never to

be imagined, never to be forgotten, and never to be repeated.

I believe the fact that we shared this experience together with the Senate staff who were here with us, this puts a unique responsibility on our shoulders.

First, let's understand what that day was about, that there are some who are trying to kind of downplay it—it was tourists visiting. We can laugh that off because we know that wasn't the case. There are others who are trying to downplay it in other ways—it was a riot, it was a protest, even that it was a violent protest. That is not what it was.

If it had happened on January 5, it would have been a violent protest. If it had happened on January 7, it would have been a violent protest. But it didn't happen on January 5. It didn't happen on January 7. It happened on a day established by law, at a time established by law, for a purpose established by law to disrupt that purpose.

It was a violent protest organized and inflamed by a President to occur at precisely the moment that the Congress of the United States was carrying out the constitutional duty to certify the election of Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS as President and Vice President of the United States.

It was designed to disrupt that certification, and it succeeded. For 5 or 6 hours, we were locked out of the Chamber while the rampagers tried to stop the certification of the election. We were barricaded in the midst of the peak of the COVID pandemic side by side with staff in a room as the insurrectionists tried to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power.

Those words “peaceful transfer of power,” “disrupting,” what does that mean?

Let's unpack it further. It was an effort to disenfranchise more than 80 million people in this country who had voted for Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS. It was the single largest effort to disenfranchise voters in the history of the United States. That is what happened as we were barricaded first in this building.

And how glad I am that you pages were not here. How glad I am I told my staff not to come to work that day. No one should have had to experience that. But it was an effort that succeeded for a period of hours to disenfranchise more than 80 million people.

Here is a powerful story. On that day, we knew who had been elected President and Vice President. We knew what the House majority would be, but we did not know what the Senate majority would be. The Senate majority wasn't clear in November, and it wasn't clear in December, and it wasn't even clear on January 5, when my colleague who just spoke, from Georgia, had his race called that he had won a special election in Georgia. As we were under attack, it was still in doubt as to who would be the majority party in the U.S. Senate.

As we were barricaded for hours in the midst of COVID in a room, side by

side with television monitors showing us what was happening at the Capitol, there then came a breaking news report that the last Senate race had been called in Georgia for JON OSSOFF, and so Democrats would now have a Senate majority.

I am a religious person. Things happen for a reason. It was unclear who would be the leadership in the Senate. But in the midst of a pandemic that had unnecessarily killed 600,000 Americans, and now with an ongoing attack against the Capitol of the United States—unique in American history—by people trying to disenfranchise 80 million people, the news suddenly came: We want new leadership. We need new leadership.

There is a reason for that. There is a reason that it happened in the middle of this attack. We have a burden on our shoulders to live up to the responsibility that we—100—uniquely share. That responsibility is to make sure that no voter—not 80 million, not 10 million, not a million, not 10, not 1—that no voter is disenfranchised in this country.

That is why we have been given this unique opportunity to lead at this moment in time. That is what being victimized by that attack means in terms of our responsibility to this country and to our history. We have to carry out that responsibility.

Now, if this were a Hollywood film, what would happen is the Democrats get the majority, and then all of a sudden we put to rest disenfranchisement—Democratic majority, we can stop the disenfranchisement of voters.

But, no, the Big Lie didn't stop. The Big Lie didn't stop when we found out we had the majority. And this is often the case in powerful stories in human history. Like, you know, when Moses leads folks through the Red Sea to the other side, it is not all great as soon as they get there. They still have work to do.

We got the majority, but we have work to do because in State after State after State, as my colleagues indicated, legislators in States where there are Republican Governors and Republican legislative Houses have thrown up one burden after the next to disenfranchise people, just as there was an effort to disenfranchise 80 million on January 6.

Let me be clear. These State legislators, they may not be wearing "Camp Auschwitz" T-shirts. They may not be carrying Confederate flags around. They may not be beating up police officers with flag poles or fence rails, but they are acting out of the same Big Lie that President Trump repeated ad nauseam when he encouraged people to come and be wild at the U.S. Capitol to overturn the peaceful transfer of power.

And so the States are embracing these strategies so well described by my colleagues to make it harder for people to vote, to enable partisan politicians to take the power to count

votes away from electoral officials if they don't like what that count would show, to even criminalize people who are trying to help their neighbors vote.

Imagine this: making it a crime to give somebody water as they are waiting to vote, a crime punishable by up to a \$1,000 fine, by up to a year in jail. This is the same Big Lie tactic that led to the attack on this body, and it is happening all over this country. There is a burden uniquely on our shoulders, if we were paying attention on January 6, to stand boldly to stop it and to stop it once and for all.

That is what the Freedom to Vote Act is about. It is about ensuring that these mass efforts of disenfranchisement, which reached their most vivid and flowering in the violent attack on our Capitol, don't occur and that people have the ability to get access to a ballot and to have confidence that their ballots will be counted with integrity and that weird schemes and stunts and penalties and criminal punishment won't be thrown in their paths by one high hurdle after the next to keep them from participating in a democracy that we proudly proclaim ourselves to be. That is why I am so proud to be one of the cosponsors of this bill with my colleagues.

I was a civil rights lawyer for 17 years. You might think that is why I like this bill. No. The thing that makes me passionate about the bill is I was an eyewitness to the biggest disenfranchisement effort in the history of the United States, and I don't think we can say: Yes, we were here, and we were eyewitnesses to it. It happened to us and the people we care about, but there is nothing we can do.

We can't say, after having seen what we have seen and done what we have done and been where we have been, that there is nothing we can do. We can't. We have to act.

Let me just conclude and say this: I have been on 10 ballots and been sworn into office many times as a city councilman, as a mayor, as a Lieutenant Governor, as a Governor, and as a U.S. Senator. When you get sworn in, you always say some version of this—it varies slightly in local and State office, as the Presiding Officer knows, who was also a mayor and a Governor, and it also has some version of this within it—a pledge to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

I had an epiphany in the days after January 6, and the epiphany was this: When I would take that oath of office, it was just kind of like the thing you would say so you could do your job. If you had asked me, "Hey, Senator Kaine," or "Hey, Governor Kaine," or "Hey, Councilman Kaine, what is your job?" I would have given you a job description, and the job description would have been that I want to build schools; that I want to make sure that our troops have the resources they need to keep our country safe. I mean,

I always had a job description in my mind. I have been in elected office for 27 years now. I have always had a job description in my mind: education, healthcare, defense—the next thing on my "to do" list. I always had a job description in my mind.

Never did I think, until after January 6, that my oath of office was my job description. We say that oath of office, and we sometimes don't think about it. No. That oath of office is my job description, and I am kind of sorry that it took me 27 years to figure that out: to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Those who would disenfranchise 80 million or those who would disenfranchise 1 are domestic enemies of the Constitution of the United States.

I have pledged to support and defend that Constitution. This bill—the debate that we will have and the vote that we will have—is a test of whether we mean what we say. I so look forward to engaging in this most important debate with my colleagues in the days to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, before I begin, I ask unanimous consent to deliver a portion of my remarks in Spanish.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, in Spanish, we say "en Espanol," but I know the Presiding Officer knew that from Colorado.

I rise today, as we mark the beginning of Hispanic Heritage Month, to reflect on a historic leader whose work inspires me in this fight for voting rights and the work that we have before us.

Willie Velasquez, recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, dedicated his life to improving the freedom to vote in Latino communities.

Everywhere he went, he brought a simple motto. You might have heard it.

(English translation of the statement made in Spanish is as follows:)

"Your vote is your voice."

Willie Velasquez was born in 1944 and grew up in a Latino community in Texas which suffered from the harms of segregation, redlining, and government neglect. He understood that the path to greater recognition for Latinos was through participation in our democracy. So Willie set out to make sure Latinos across the Southwest could participate.

In 1974, Willie Velasquez founded his groundbreaking organization, the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project. Through his efforts, Willie helped bring the vote—and a powerful voice—to many Latino communities.

Now, Willie's successes were built on the hard-earned victories of those of past civil rights leaders. Especially critical was Congress's 1975 extension

of the Voting Rights Act—yes, a bipartisan reauthorization of the Federal Voting Rights Act—which established protections for language minorities, like Spanish speakers. In just 10 years, with Willie's and other activists' hard work on the ground, the number of Latinos registered to vote nearly doubled, and in the same 10 years, the number of Latinos holding elected office also nearly doubled.

That is the power of the freedom to vote and the power of what we can do here in the Senate and here in Congress—give every American a voice in our democracy.

Now, in his time, Willie fought to do exactly this, like the generations of Americans of all ages, colors, creeds, and genders who came before him. Their efforts reflect a fundamental truth about our country: We are stronger when more Americans can vote, and we are stronger when all communities have a say in government. But the path to realizing our highest ideals has never been easy. From a convention hall in Seneca Falls to a bridge in Selma, from Willie's home in San Antonio, TX, to this very Chamber, the voting rights' victories of each generation have been hard-fought and hard-won, and it is no different today.

In recent months, we have seen the latest challenge to the core of our democracy: scores of new laws proposed by Republican State legislatures to target the past five decades of gains in voting rights; cynical politicians, spreading false claims of voter fraud because they fear losing in a fair election. You can see the danger of it even in my home State of California where, just yesterday, we held a recall election. Republicans ran a campaign of disinformation, spreading baseless claims of massive voter fraud before the polls even closed, before they even opened, and long before a single ballot was even counted. It is straight out of Donald Trump's playbook—the same playbook that perpetuated the Big Lie and fueled the domestic terrorism that the world witnessed on January 6.

It is no coincidence that the cynical claims of voter fraud are often targeted at communities of color. In the face of these challenges, we must overcome, together, again. We must renew our collective fight for our democracy. It is up to us. The time is now to get the job done.

It is an honor to lead the Freedom to Vote Act alongside my colleagues Senators KLOBUCHAR, MERKLEY, WARNOCK, MANCHIN, KING, TESTER, and KAINE.

The Freedom to Vote Act will make it easier for all eligible citizens to register to vote and to cast their ballots. This bill will set a baseline of protections for voters across the country, with commonsense, proven reforms that have already been successfully implemented in blue and red States across the country. I urge all of my colleagues to join us and vote to strengthen our democracy.

As the first Latino to represent California in this body, in the U.S. Senate, I am proud to be spending this Hispanic Heritage Month fighting for voting rights because so many of our community's gains have been achieved through political participation and representation. The fight to expand voting rights is, indeed, part of our heritage. It is also a tradition that unites Americans because we have come together, generation after generation, to expand the promise of our democracy for all. Yes, we are strongest when every eligible voter can make their voice heard.

"Your vote is your voice."

(English translation of the statement made in Spanish is as follows:)

"Your vote is your voice."

I yield the floor.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues: Senator PADILLA, with your great experience as secretary of state and how that has assisted us in coming together on this bill; Senator WARNOCK, with the passion and firsthand experience you have in Georgia; Senator KAINE, for an extraordinary speech, wherein we all had to step back and think about our job description: to protect and defend the Constitution. It is not just ours on this side of the aisle; it is also our colleagues' on the other side of the aisle.

We have this special obligation to protect this democracy and to cherish it and to pass it on to the next generation. The way you do that fundamentally is by guaranteeing Americans the freedom to vote. That is all this bill is about—putting in place minimum national standards that we see in so many of our States but that, sadly, right now, are threatened in a number of those States for no other reason except—to quote Reverend Warnock—that some people don't want some people to vote. Our democracy is too important to let that happen.

With that, we are going to end our segment here, and we will be back to discuss this bill more next week.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING CORPORAL DAEGAN WILLIAM-TYELER PAGE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a fallen Marine, Cpl Daegan William-Tyler Page. Corporal Page was a son of the heartland, originally from Red Oak, IA, and raised in Omaha, NE. He is one of 13 brave servicemembers who gave his life in service to our country during the evac-

uation of Afghanistan. Just 23 years old when he was killed at the attack at the Kabul airport, he gave his life defending our citizens and our allies as they tried to escape from Afghanistan.

Right after graduating from Millard South High School, Corporal Page joined the Marines and was part of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment. He enjoyed playing hockey, and was an avid sports fan, especially of the Chicago Blackhawks. Corporal Page loved spending time outdoors, hunting, and being in the water. He was a Boy Scout, a good friend to many, and a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

My prayers are with his parents, Wendy and Craig Adelson and Greg and Jenni Page, as well as his brothers and sister, his grandparents, his girlfriend Jessica Ellison, and his other family members and many friends.

We all owe Corporal Page and his fellow marines a debt of gratitude. He and those he served with rescued countless Americans and allies. They went into the chaos of the withdrawal from Afghanistan to help strangers that they never met—to save lives. There is no doubt in my mind that many lives were saved because of Corporal Page's service, and his sacrifice will not be forgotten.

NOTICE OF A TIE VOTE UNDER S. RES. 27

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to print the following letter in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE, COMMITTEE ON
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND
PENSIONS,

Washington, DC, August 3, 2021.

To the Secretary of the Senate:

PN618, the nomination of David Weil, of Massachusetts, to be Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, Department of Labor, having been referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, the Committee, with a quorum present, has voted on the nomination as follows—

On the question of reporting the nomination without recommendation, 11 ayes to 11 noes.

In accordance with section 3, paragraph (1)(A) of S. Res. 27 of the 117th Congress, I hereby give notice that the Committee has not reported the nomination because of a tie vote, and ask that this notice be printed in the RECORD pursuant to the resolution.

PATTY MURRAY,
Chair.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 2747. A bill to expand Americans' access to the ballot box and reduce the influence of big money in politics, and for other purposes.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-1973. A communication from the Secretary, Judicial Conference of the United States, transmitting, a report relative to Article III judgeship recommendations for the 117th Congress; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1974. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to information on the centralized suspicious orders reporting database; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1975. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, a legislative proposal entitled "Cybercrime Mitigation Act"; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND
JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself and Mr. PADILLA):

S. 2749. A bill to prohibit the use of Federal funds to close or relocate the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, California; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mrs. FISCHER (for herself and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. 2750. A bill to amend the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 to establish a precision agriculture loan program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. MERKLEY:

S. 2751. A bill to establish an occupational safety and health standard to protect farmworkers from wildfire smoke and excessive heat, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. MURPHY, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Ms. SMITH, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. COONS, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. CARPER, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. BROWN, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. REED, Mr. MARKEY, Ms. WARREN, Mr. LUJÁN, Mrs. MURRAY, and Ms. ROSEN):

S. 2752. A bill to amend the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 to protect civil rights and otherwise prevent meaningful harm to third parties, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. PADILLA (for himself, Mr. PAUL, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. COONS):

S. 2753. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to authorize lawful permanent resident status for certain college graduates who entered the United States as children, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. CORTEZ MASTO):

S. 2754. A bill to provide funding for the deployment of Next Generation 9-1-1, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. HEINRICH:

S. 2755. A bill to authorize the Secretary of Education to award grants to States to empower public institutions of higher education in the States to provide student support services to students from low-income backgrounds, historically underrepresented students, first-generation college enrollees, parenting students, students with disabilities, and student veterans; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. DAINES (for himself, Ms. WARREN, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. ROMNEY, Mr. Kaine, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. BENNET, Mr. RISCH, Ms. SMITH, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. MARSHALL, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. YOUNG, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. HAGERTY, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. BROWN, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. PADILLA, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. WARNER, Mr. BARRASSO, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. THUNE, and Mr. HICKENLOOPER):

S. 2756. A bill to posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal, in commemoration of the service members who perished as a result of the attack in Afghanistan on August 26, 2021, during the evacuation of citizens of the United States and Afghan allies at Hamid Karzai International Airport, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND
SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. BROWN (for himself and Mr. PORTMAN):

S. Res. 365. A resolution honoring the life, legacy, and achievements of MacNolia Cox; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. PETERS (for himself and Mr. KENNEDY):

S. Res. 366. A resolution expressing support for the designation of the week of September 11 through September 17 as "Patriot Week"; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. ERNST (for herself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. MARSHALL, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. WICKER, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mr. DAINES, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. RUBIO):

S. Con. Res. 15. A concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the withdrawal of Armed Forces from Afghanistan does not undermine or diminish the sacrifice, efforts, and accomplishments of the members of the Armed Forces, diplomats, humanitarians, allies, and partners; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 98

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 98, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a credit against tax for neighborhood revitalization, and for other purposes.

S. 212

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 212, a bill to amend the Inter-

nal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a refundable tax credit against income tax for the purchase of qualified access technology for the blind.

S. 216

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 216, a bill to direct the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to establish a grant program to award grants to eligible entities to purchase and install, as applicable, zero emissions port equipment and technology, and for other purposes.

S. 754

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the names of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) were added as cosponsors of S. 754, a bill to provide health insurance benefits for outpatient and inpatient items and services related to the diagnosis and treatment of a congenital anomaly or birth defect.

S. 921

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF) was added as a cosponsor of S. 921, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to further protect officers and employees of the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 1134

At the request of Mrs. BLACKBURN, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1134, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Master Sergeant Rodrick "Roddie" Edmonds in recognition of his heroic actions during World War II.

S. 1404

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. HICKENLOOPER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1404, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 23d Headquarters Special Troops and the 3133d Signal Service Company in recognition of their unique and distinguished service as a "Ghost Army" that conducted deception operations in Europe during World War II.

S. 1479

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1479, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a tax credit for taxpayers who remove lead-based hazards.

S. 1663

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1663, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, and title 39, United States Code, to provide the United States Postal Service the authority to mail alcoholic beverages, and for other purposes.

S. 1772

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Michigan

(Ms. STABENOW) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1772, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to increase survivors benefits for disabled widows, widowers, and surviving divorced spouses, and for other purposes.

S. 2085

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2085, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas and criteria air pollutant emission fees, provide rebates to low- and middle-income Americans, invest in fossil fuel communities and workers, invest in environmental justice communities, and for other purposes.

S. 2238

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the names of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) and the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) were added as cosponsors of S. 2238, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize and extend the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Prevention and Services program, and for other purposes.

S. 2256

At the request of Mr. DAINES, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2256, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to limit the charitable deduction for certain qualified conservation contributions.

S. 2266

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the names of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2266, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to improve the historic rehabilitation tax credit, and for other purposes.

S. 2275

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the names of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) were added as cosponsors of S. 2275, a bill to authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to build safer, thriving communities, and save lives, by investing in effective community-based violence reduction initiatives, and for other purposes.

S. 2339

At the request of Mrs. FISCHER, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2339, a bill to amend the Clean Air Act with respect to the ethanol waiver for Reid vapor pressure limitations under such Act.

S. 2351

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the names of the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2351, a bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act to clarify how controlled

substance analogues that are imported or offered for import are to be regulated, and for other purposes.

S. 2372

At the request of Mr. HEINRICH, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2372, a bill to amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to make supplemental funds available for management of fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need as determined by State fish and wildlife agencies, and for other purposes.

S. 2419

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2419, a bill to authorize the President to declare a smoke emergency, and for other purposes.

S. 2430

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2430, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand the exclusion for certain conservation subsidies to include subsidies for water conservation or efficiency measures and storm water management measures.

S. 2552

At the request of Mr. MARKEY, the names of the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) were added as cosponsors of S. 2552, a bill to promote long-term economic recovery and job creation in underserved communities by providing for investment in catalytic local predevelopment projects for resilient climate infrastructure innovation and to provide assistance to support State and local project development, and for other purposes.

S. 2598

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. HAWLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2598, a bill to amend title 11, United States Code, to improve the treatment of student loans in bankruptcy, and for other purposes.

S. 2631

At the request of Mr. BOOKER, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2631, a bill to amend the Small Business Act to create a program to provide funding for organizations that support startup businesses in formation and early growth stages by providing entrepreneurs with resources and services to produce viable businesses, and for other purposes.

S. 2649

At the request of Mr. YOUNG, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2649, a bill to establish a demonstration program to provide integrated care for Medicare beneficiaries with end-stage renal disease, and for other purposes.

S. 2658

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2658, a bill to ensure that older adults and individuals with disabilities are prepared for disasters, and for other purposes.

S. 2738

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the names of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) and the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2738, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the United States Army Dustoff crews of the Vietnam War, collectively, in recognition of their extraordinary heroism and life-saving actions in Vietnam.

S. CON. RES. 12

At the request of Mr. WARNOCK, the name of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Con. Res. 12, a concurrent resolution recognizing the significance of equal pay and the disparity in wages paid to men and to Black women.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTION

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself and Mr. PADILLA):

S. 2749. A bill to prohibit the use of Federal funds to close or relocate the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, California; to the Committee on Armed Services.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the "Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego Protection Act," which I introduced today with Senator PADILLA.

This bill would protect the historic Marine Corps recruit training base in San Diego and ensure that Marines have a world-class training facility on the West Coast.

The base became operational in 1921 and began its mission of training and "the making of Marines" in 1923. On January 1, 1948, Marine Corps Base, San Diego was officially renamed Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego.

As needed, the base has increased the number of new Marine recruits that it trains to ensure our readiness during periods of conflict.

For example, the Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego augmented troop training during the Korean War and expanded training during the Vietnam War. In recent decades, the base has prepared Marines to fight in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The installation's unique Spanish colonial design by Bertram Goodhue adds to its historical richness. Twentyfive of the Depot's original buildings have been deemed worthy of preservation for their historical significance and are part of the National Register of Historic Places.

In May, the San Diego Depot celebrated its historic graduation of its

first gender-integrated class of new Marines, well in advance of the requirement in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 for Marines to conduct integrated gender recruit training by 2028.

Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego accomplished that mission this year, demonstrating the can-do spirit that has animated the base since its establishment.

Our bill would prohibit the closure of the historic Marine Corps Recruit Depot located in San Diego. It would protect regional jobs and tourist revenue generated by the installation.

The bill would also eliminate the need for costly new military construction if the training mission were relocated, and prevent the disruption of families and training.

Lastly, the bill would guarantee the annual basic training for Marine recruits at the place where their fellow Marines have trained for a century. On the 100th anniversary of the installation, we must continue this critical mission in San Diego and preserve its history.

It is imperative to maintain facilities that train and prepare our Armed Forces to meet the challenges of tomorrow. The protection of the Depot preserves an important legacy of the Marine Corps. The installation also offers a strategic location to position forces in the West.

I hope my colleagues will join me in support of this bill. Thank you Mr. President. I yield the floor.

By Mr. PADILLA (for himself, Mr. PAUL, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. COONS):

S. 2753. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to authorize lawful permanent resident status for certain college graduates who entered the United States as children, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. President, I rise to introduce the "America's Children Act of 2021."

This legislation would ensure that dependents of immigrants in the green card backlog do not age out of their legal immigration status when they turn 21 and provides a pathway to permanency for these children and young adults.

WHAT THE BILL WOULD DO

This legislation would provide a pathway to permanent residency for dependents of nonimmigrant visa holders if they have been a dependent for at least 4 years, have lived in the United States for 10 years and have graduated from an institution of higher education in the United States.

The bill fills an important gap in our legal immigration system, since many immigrants and their families often have to wait decades to receive a green card due to numerical limitations and per country caps. The children who age out of dependent status have few options to stay in the United States once they turn 21 and even fewer paths to

permanency even though many have only known the United States as their home. It is unjust that these children and young people are at risk of deportation to their birth countries simply because our legal immigration system is outdated.

WHY THE BILL IS NEEDED

There are an estimated 255,000 children who are or were the dependents of parents with lawful work visas, currently awaiting their green card processing in the immigration backlog. All of these individuals are at risk of deportation at age 21 if their applications are not processed in time, or have already aged out of status.

This bill is a commonsense measure that ensures that children who have grown up in our communities and wish to go to a university and work in the United States have the opportunity to do so. Most of these individuals do not have close ties in their birth countries and removing them from the United States would mean separation from their families and the life they have always known.

Thank you Mr. President. I yield the floor.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 365—HONORING THE LIFE, LEGACY, AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF MACNOLIA COX

Mr. BROWN (for himself and Mr. PORTMAN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

Whereas MacNolia Cox (Montiere) was born on January 12, 1923, in Kenmore, Ohio, to her parents John Thomas Cox and Alberta (Evans) Key, and raised in Akron, Ohio;

Whereas MacNolia was a member of Livingston Baptist Church and, as a child, enjoyed reading the dictionary from A to Z to learn the definitions and spellings of words;

Whereas, in 1936, at the age of 13, MacNolia won the Akron Spelling Bee at the Akron Armory over the course of 2.5 hours, besting 50 other participants and becoming the first Black participant to win the competition;

Whereas MacNolia won the Akron Spelling Bee with the word "voluble" in front of 3,000 people, taking home a \$25 prize and a ticket to Washington, D.C., to compete in the Scripps National Spelling Bee;

Whereas, upon arriving in Washington, D.C., MacNolia was forced to stay in a segregated hotel and was not permitted sit with the other participants during the competition;

Whereas, during the competition, MacNolia was asked to spell the word "nemeses", which at the time was capitalized and therefore barred from the competition;

Whereas the use of this word in the competition was immediately protested by a Beacon Journal reporter, and despite learning 100,000 approved words, MacNolia misspelled the word and finished the competition fifth overall, taking home a \$75 prize;

Whereas, upon her return to Akron, MacNolia was greeted by a parade of hundreds of cars of community members, where local dignitaries made speeches on behalf of her success;

Whereas MacNolia went on to work as a domestic employee for a local doctor; and

Whereas MacNolia Cox Montiere died of cancer on September 12, 1976, at the age of 53, and was survived by her husband John, stepson Nelson Montiere, stepdaughter Joan Montiere Tabler, brother Otis Cox, sisters Orabell Finney, Rosa Lee Jackson, and Ollie Davis, and 1 granddaughter: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate honors the life, legacy, and achievements of MacNolia Cox, an inspiration for young students of color today.

SENATE RESOLUTION 366—EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE DESIGNATION OF THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 11 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 17 AS "PATRIOT WEEK"

Mr. PETERS (for himself and Mr. KENNEDY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 366

Whereas the events that led to the signing of the Constitution of the United States by the delegates to the Constitutional Convention on September 17, 1787, have significance for every citizen of the United States and are honored in public schools across the United States on Constitution Day, which is September 17 of each year;

Whereas the rule of law, the social compact, democracy, liberty, equality, and unalienable human rights are the essential values upon which the United States flourishes;

Whereas diversity is one of the greatest strengths of the United States, and the motto inscribed on the Great Seal of the United States, "E pluribus unum", Latin for "out of many, one", symbolizes that individuals in the United States from all walks of life are unified by shared values;

Whereas exceptional, visionary, and indispensable individuals such as Thomas Paine, Patrick Henry, John Adams, John Marshall, George Washington, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison founded or advanced the United States;

Whereas the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions signed in Seneca Falls, New York, the Gettysburg Address, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the "I Have a Dream" speech delivered by Martin Luther King, Jr., express sentiments that have advanced liberty in the United States; and

Whereas the Bennington flag (commonly known as the "'76 flag"), the Betsy Ross flag, the current flag of the United States, the flag of the women's suffrage movement, the Union flag (commonly known as the "Fort Sumter flag"), the Gadsden flag, and the flags of the States are physical symbols of the history of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) supports the designation of the week of September 11 through September 17 as "Patriot Week";

(2) recognizes that understanding the history of the United States and the first principles of the United States is indispensable to the survival of the United States as a free people;

(3) acknowledges, in great reverence to the victims of the September 11, 2001, attacks, that citizens of the United States should take time to honor the first principles, founders, documents, and symbols of their history;

(4) recognizes that each generation should renew the spirit of the United States based on the first principles, historical figures, founding documents, and symbols of the United States; and

(5) encourages citizens, schools and other educational institutions, and Federal, State, and local governments and their agencies to recognize and participate in Patriot Week by honoring, celebrating, and promoting the study of the history of the United States so that all people of the United States may offer the reverence that is due to the free republic.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 15—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT THE WITHDRAWAL OF ARMED FORCES FROM AFGHANISTAN DOES NOT UNDERMINE OR DIMINISH THE SACRIFICE, EFFORTS, AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES, DIPLOMATS, HUMANITARIANS, ALLIES, AND PARTNERS

Ms. ERNST (for herself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. MARSHALL, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. WICKER, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mr. DAINES, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. RUBIO) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. CON. RES. 15

Whereas the United States was viciously attacked by the murderous terrorist group al-Qaida on September 11, 2001;

Whereas al-Qaida was based in Afghanistan, which was governed by the ruthless and oppressive Taliban regime;

Whereas the United States led an international coalition of military forces into Afghanistan—

(1) to destroy al-Qaida;

(2) to kill or capture Osama bin Laden; and

(3) to depose the Taliban government;

Whereas hundreds of thousands of members of the Armed Forces, diplomats, and humanitarians deployed to Afghanistan or supported operations from afar;

Whereas for nearly 2 decades, the United States was spared from further major attacks by international terror organizations; and

Whereas the withdrawal of the presence of the United States in Afghanistan led to—

(1) the collapse of the Afghan government;

(2) the return of the Taliban to Afghan rule; and

(3) great heartache for so many: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That it is the sense of Congress that—

(1) the men and women who undertook the efforts of the past years in Afghanistan provided heroic service to the country;

(2) the peace the United States experienced is a direct result of the actions of the brave members of the Armed Forces, diplomats, and humanitarians;

(3) despite the chaotic end to operations in Afghanistan, the service of the members of the Armed Forces is something to be remembered, lauded, and honored; and

(4) any veterans who feel stress, anger, or disappointment from the end of operations in Afghanistan should seek available resources and the comfort, guidance, and counsel of friends, mentors, and caregivers.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mrs. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I have 6 requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

The Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 15, 2021, at 9:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

The Committee on Environment and Public Works is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 15, 2021, at 9:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 15, 2021, at 10:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 15, 2021, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 15, 2021, at 9:45 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, September 15, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2747

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the title of the bill for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2747) to expand Americans' access to the ballot box and reduce the influence of big money in politics, and for other purposes.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceeding.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

HONORING THE LIFE, LEGACY, AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF MACNOLIA COX

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 365, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 365) honoring the life, legacy, and achievements of MacNolia Cox.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 365) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16 THROUGH MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2021

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10:15 a.m., Thursday, September 16, for a pro forma session with no business conducted; further, that when the Senate adjourns on Thursday, it stand adjourned until 3 p.m. on Monday, September 20, 2021; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; and that upon the conclusion of morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Strickland nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senators GRASSLEY, ERNST, and CORNYN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Iowa.

HONORING CORPORAL DAEGAN WILLIAM-TYLER PAGE

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, words can't describe the emotions I felt watching the ruthless Taliban once again seize control of Afghanistan, the very same country from where terrorists plotted the attacks on America two decades earlier.

The world watched hopelessly as tens of thousands of people, including American citizens and our Afghan allies,

desperately attempted to escape the terror and bleak future certain to return under the rule of the Taliban.

Through the chaos and the panic, the brave men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces, who once freed the Nation from the terrorist regime, stood as protectors at the Kabul airport for those who were desperately seeking a way out.

Then, on August 26, a terrorist attack at the airport claimed the lives of 13 of these brave servicemembers who were assisting with the evacuation, marking one of the deadliest days for U.S. forces during the 20-year conflict.

Marine Corporal Daegan William-Tyler Page was one of those killed in action on that day. Daegan was a young man from Red Oak, IA, who truly represents the greatness of our State, our country, and the U.S. Marine Corps in which he proudly served. Daegan may have been just 23 years old, but he died a hero who lived a life of service to his community and to his Nation.

Our hearts go out to those to whom he meant the most: his girlfriend, Jessica; his parents, Wendy and Craig Adelson and Greg and Jenni Page; his grandparents; and his four siblings, Corey, Garrett, Mason, and Emerson, to whom Daegan has always been a hero, even before he became a U.S. marine.

The wounds of war obviously aren't just borne by the warrior. It is the family of the fallen who will carry the scars for a lifetime. The hole left in their lives by the loss of Daegan can never, ever be filled. So let's also keep Daegan's family in our prayers.

Being from Red Oak, IA, I know Daegan's family. I have grown up with Daegan's family. It was my best friend in Red Oak that texted me after that explosion at the Kabul airport. She is the one who told me that Wendy Tye's son Daegan had been killed in this explosion.

So I gave the family time to come together, and that next morning I called Wendy's mother, Peggy. I love Peggy very much. I love their entire family very much, and I told her I was so sorry about the loss of Daegan. And she told me: JONI, just please let everybody know what an amazing young man that Daegan was.

And he was an extraordinary young man. Before we ended our conversation, she said: JONI, give that precious Libby of yours a hug for me, like I used to so many years ago when she was a little girl.

And she said: You never know when you will get that last hug from someone you love.

And, Peggy, I did. I gave my daughter Libby a hug.

So while Daegan was a tough marine—he really was—again, an amazing young man. He was fun, loving, and he had a giant heart and a soft spot for animals. He had three dogs—Shyla, Gracie, and Finn.

Growing up in Red Oak, and then in Omaha, Daegan's commitment to serv-

ice began at a young age as a longtime member of the Boy Scouts.

While he was just a child when the terrorists attacked America on September 11, 2001, after graduating from Millard South High School, he answered the call to serve his country by joining the U.S. Marine Corps.

Daegan's family says that he loved the brotherhood of the Marines and was proud to serve as a member of the 2d Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, CA.

Daegan was always a dedicated team member. It didn't matter what it was, but he was dedicated, according to his former hockey teammates who, together, won the Nebraska State championship tournament. Omaha's hockey community has fittingly paid tribute to Daegan by placing hockey sticks on their porches in his memory.

A memorial service to celebrate Daegan's life is being held this Friday at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Omaha.

Like his family, teammates, and fellow servicemembers, we mourn the loss of Daegan, but also honor his heroism and his valor. He has been awarded the Purple Heart for making that ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

His life in Red Oak, IA, and Omaha, NE, and his death, remind us that this world is a very dangerous place with many wishing to do the United States harm. Our protection here at home depends upon the sacrifice and the service of many heroes, those like Daegan.

Let it not be forgotten that thousands of other lives were rescued from pending doom because of the bravery of Daegan and the 12 other servicemembers who lost their lives that day while standing guard to ensure the safe passage of others out of Afghanistan.

While it is heartbreaking that he was taken from this world too soon, Daegan will forever have the gratitude of our Nation.

So Wendy and Greg, and to your families, please accept my heartfelt condolences on the loss of your beautiful son, Daegan. The American people will never forget him, nor will they ever forget his life of service.

Semper Fidelis, Daegan, and god-speed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

HONORING LANCE CORPORAL DAVID LEE ESPINOZA

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, in the final days of the U.S. military's presence in Afghanistan, our country suffered a devastating loss. Thirteen servicemembers were killed in a terrorist attack at the airport in Kabul, marking the deadliest day for the U.S. military in more than a decade in that country.

These young men and women, all between the ages of 20 and 31, were taken from loving families—parents, siblings,

spouses, fiancées—even a baby on the way.

In Laredo, TX, on Monday, I had the solemn honor of attending the funeral for one of these heroes and offering my condolences to his family.

U.S. Marine Corps LCpl David Lee Espinoza was only 20 years old when he lost his life last month, but he represented the very best of the Marine Corps, the U.S. military, and the very best of America.

From childhood, he dreamed of serving in the military. He joined the Marines right after high school to serve his country and to protect our freedom. And last month, he made the ultimate sacrifice in service to that mission.

The pride in this young marine and the gratitude for his service and sacrifice was visible throughout the Laredo community. Driving through Laredo from the airport, the streets were lined with folks, including schoolchildren holding up American flags in honor of LCpl Espinoza. Veterans from across the State proudly stood outside the entrance to St. Patrick Catholic Church to pay tribute to their fallen brother. And across the street, a giant American flag hung from the ladder of two fire trucks.

I attended the mass, officiated by Bishop James Tamayo, and paid my respects to David Espinoza's family and other members of his family.

There is nothing we can do to bring back LCpl Espinoza, but we can ensure that his service and sacrifice, and that of the other servicemembers killed that day, will never be forgotten.

I join those across the country who are mourning the loss of their heroes and honoring the sacrifices they have made for our freedoms. To me, one of the most unique things about the U.S. military—this is not just about our freedom. They were protecting the rights and the freedom and the dignity of people on the other side of the planet. Our Nation is forever grateful to these young men and women and their loved ones who made unfathomable sacrifices for our freedoms.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we are back in session after a busy August, and we are hitting the ground running in the U.S. Senate.

This week, congressional committees have heard from top Biden administration officials about the disastrous withdrawal of our troops from Afghanistan. In the months to come, there will be more questions about the decisions that led to the collapse of that country and how the administration plans to protect the American people from terrorist threats moving forward.

You know, the whole premise of our going to Afghanistan in the first place was to deny vacuums that could be filled by terrorist organizations like al-Qaida and ISIS and thus represent a threat to the homeland not only of people in Europe and in the region but also

to the people here in the United States. Some called 9/11/2001 a failure of imagination because we never imagined that terrorists overseas would plan and execute a terrorist attack that would kill 3,000 Americans using 2 airplanes to fly into the World Trade Center.

So now, with the embarrassing and disastrous withdrawal by the Biden administration of our troops from Afghanistan, the question is, How long will it take the terrorists to reconstitute themselves and present a clear and present danger to not only the region but also the continent of Europe and the United States? But for right now, we deserve and the American people deserve answers and accountability. And it is not just these 13 marines who lost their lives in Afghanistan; other American servicemembers have lost their lives and literally their limbs to try to deny a safe haven to terrorist organizations like al-Qaida and ISIS.

I worry that they may worry that their sacrifices may have been in vain if, in fact, these terrorists occupy this vacuum which has now been created with a very hospitable Taliban, which was responsible for hosting al-Qaida in the first place. I worry that these troops feel like their sacrifice has been in vain. But I want to assure them that they did what they were asked to do by their Commander in Chief with honor and respect and great personal sacrifice. And no matter what happens going forward, nothing will ever change the respect and the honor that we have for them and their service.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we also have a fast-approaching government funding deadline. To be specific, we have about 16 days before we will be knee deep in a government shutdown unless Congress appropriates money to keep the lights on. Following a year and a half of economic instability, there is no justification to unleash even more uncertainty on our economy and on hard-working American families. Then, on top of that, we are told that our Democratic colleagues intend to pass a \$3½ trillion—probably closer to \$5 trillion—reckless tax-and-spending-spree bill, otherwise known as reconciliation.

You know, during the last year, during the COVID-19 crisis, we worked very well together because we knew this was a national emergency that did not respect political parties or ideology or persons, and we had to do everything we could on an emergency basis to help. But that emergency is quickly getting in our rearview mirror, and our Democratic colleagues seem to be determined to continue to recklessly spend borrowed money that will have to be repaid by the next generation of Americans and to raise taxes to the highest level in recent memory, thus compounding the risk not only of inflation, which is a regressive tax on working families when the food they

put on the table, the gasoline they buy, and the appliances they buy all are seeing prices going up at very quickly escalating levels. There is a real danger that this sort of reckless tax-and-spending spree will have a very negative effect not only on them but also on our economy more generally.

For months, we know our Democratic colleagues have been debating back and forth about how much they are willing to spend on a liberal wish list. The chairman of the Budget Committee initially floated a staggering figure of \$6 trillion.

Now, I never dreamed that in my lifetime—certainly in my service here in the U.S. Senate—I would ever vote for a trillion-dollar bill, but I did during the emergency called COVID-19 because I thought it was necessary. But this kind of reckless spending is not necessary. This is an ideological juggernaut to try to achieve things to transform this country into some western European social democracy—social welfare state.

Well, after months of negotiating amongst themselves, our Democratic colleagues have now settled not on a \$6 trillion figure but on \$3½ trillion. It is still a shocking number. Nonpartisan budget experts, as I indicated, said the actual cost would end up closer to \$5½ trillion, so don't be fooled by this so-called appearance of self-restraint. This plan is chock full of damaging tax hikes, permanent welfare with no work requirements, Green New Deal climate mandates, and a laundry list of socialist policies.

A party-line vote just before the recess laid the groundwork for the biggest government spending bonanza in American history, but now some of our Democratic colleagues are experiencing a little buyer's remorse, perhaps given the rapidly approaching date for the 2022 elections, and they are expressing some remorse or hesitation before swiping the taxpayers' credit card once more.

Senators MANCHIN and SINEMA have both voiced their opposition to the extreme \$3½ trillion figure. Earlier this month, Senator MANCHIN wrote an op-ed explaining why he won't support such irresponsible spending. Our colleagues ought to read it and to consider his arguments. He said Democratic leaders in Congress have proposed passing "the largest single spending bill in history with no regard to rising inflation, crippling debt, or the inevitability of future crises."

The fractures in the reckless tax-and-spending spree aren't just deepening in the Senate; House Democrats are beginning to wring their hands, trying to figure out if they can justify such extreme spending and taxing. And I must say it certainly will require some creative thinking.

Trillions more in borrowing when American families are already being pummeled by inflation; a sweeping amnesty with no effort to control the growing immigration crisis at the

southern border; tax hikes on American families and small businesses—our Democratic colleagues are proposing the most extreme policy proposals that one might imagine in this one massive bill. So getting their Members on board is half the battle, but we are now seeing the internal debates and discussions among Democrats wondering if this is the wisest course of conduct, because there is no doubt about it—this is a massive amount of money, and Democrats are going to have to raise the debt ceiling by themselves if they want to write a check that big.

This is where things get a little kooky. Even though this is a partisan spending spree, our friends across the aisle expect Republicans to join them in raising the debt ceiling, claiming that this should be a bipartisan effort. But it is clear Democrats don't require Republican support. They can attach this credit increase to the tax-and-spending-spree bill and pass it with only Democratic support. The only problem is, they don't really want to own it. They want political cover. They want us to help them pull the pin out of the economic grenade that they are about to toss in the laps of the American people. When this reckless tax-and-spending spree inevitably blows up, they want to be able to blame someone else. They want plausible deniability.

But it is not going to work that way. Senator MCCONNELL, the Republican leader, and folks on our side of the aisle have made it crystal clear on that point for months. If they want to spend alone, they are going to have to address the debt ceiling alone. Our Democratic colleagues can't cut Republicans out of the process when it is convenient and then beg cooperation when they need someone else to blame.

I have no doubt that our colleagues across the aisle will come up with a host of gimmicks to try to get Republicans on board. Some have suggested threatening to shut down the government or withholding critical disaster relief. To be absolutely clear, folks on our side of the aisle do not want a government shutdown. The American people and our economy are already experiencing enough pain. In my State of Texas, we suffered enough natural disasters for me to understand how critical it is to get disaster relief out the door as quickly as possible. Communities impacted by hurricanes and wildfires do not deserve to be treated as political pawns on a chessboard.

If Democrats want to charge \$5½ trillion to the taxpayers' credit card, they will have to increase the credit limit themselves, and they can do it by themselves with the \$3½ trillion social welfare bill, and they can't treat disaster victims and government funding as hostages.

Our Democratic colleagues already went on one partisan spending spree earlier this year—an additional \$1.9 trillion under the guise of providing COVID relief, when only about 10 percent of it actually addressed COVID.

That has fueled, in the opinion of people like former Democratic economists, office holders—Larry Summers, for example, who said that we are risking a growth of inflation, which will raise prices on commodities and things that people need in their daily lives in order to live and thus form an invisible tax.

As it stands today, our debt is roughly 107 percent of our gross domestic product—\$28.7 trillion and counting. Most of us can't imagine what a trillion dollars is, much less a billion dollars, but it is roughly \$28.7 trillion. And the sad news is, somebody is going to have to pay that back—somebody. I believe it is simply immoral for us to continue spending, borrow money, raise the debt, and expect future generations to pick up the tab. We know, at the same time, families are being hammered by inflation, as I said, and small businesses are still trying to lure employees back to work.

So we are not going to assist with an encore performance of the partisan spending spree that we saw earlier this year. If our Democratic colleagues believe this partisan tax-and-spending spree is a wise investment for the American people, they are going to have to sell it to the American people and up the credit limit on their own.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, border security is one of the government's most important responsibilities. A sovereign, successful Nation's self-determination and safety depend upon it, and we are no exception.

Our border security rests exclusively with the Federal Government. And the Department of Homeland Security—a Cabinet created in 2002, I believe, in the aftermath of the September 11 attack—is entrusted with this paramount duty of protecting our border.

Fusing homeland with security for its name wasn't an accident. That wordage casts the Department's purpose to protect the country from external threats, both from people and from products. And Americans pay for that Department handsomely and for its responsibilities about \$52 billion a year.

However, a grave, unprecedented crisis exists at our southern border. Our television reminds us of that fact daily. Foreign nationals are illegally crossing into our country from Mexico by the thousands every day. I heard recently that last month was the biggest number coming in for over 20 years. But illegal immigration isn't the only crime cascading over our borders.

Mexican cartels are importing deadly drugs and trafficking humans. These horrific, unabated events make very clear that the cartels effectively control our southern border. They actually manage who and what enters our country from Mexico.

But the danger is preventable. The trouble exists because the current ad-

ministration deliberately refuses to secure the border.

Homeland Security's border dereliction is inexcusable, and it happens to be life-threatening, not only from drugs but from criminals and for national security because terrorists have been arrested.

Communities across all States, then, are plagued by the crime and the drugs killing Americans by the tens of thousands every year. The figure from 2020 is over 93,000 Americans dying from drug overdoses—a 31-percent increase from just the previous year. That exceeds the Rose Bowl's capacity, as just one example of comparison.

One drug is very prolific: Mexican fentanyl, probably fentanyl coming through Mexico from China. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid. It is 50 times more potent than heroin. An infinitesimal amount, even as small as a grain of salt, can cause a death. The cartels are producing the deadly drug and smuggling it into the United States at record highs. They are also adding fentanyl to other drugs for increased potency and, of course, increased profits—often without the user of that drug even knowing that fact—and sometimes even market that fentanyl-laced drug into heroin.

Unsurprisingly, then, deaths result. From January 2019 to June of 2019, almost 62 percent of the overdose deaths involved a fentanyl-related substance.

The authority scheduling fentanyl analogs expire next month. Congress must act to permanently schedule these drugs and punish the cartels and the drug dealers who spread this poison across our communities.

We are a nation of compassion, but we are also a nation of laws. We are not obligated under any charade of compassion to ignore border crime, particularly the surge of deadly drugs killing tens of thousands here each year. But the government, as we see, sits idly by as cartel drugs poison Americans and unleash drug-related violence upon our communities.

Border security is essential in keeping our public safety threats and a cartel-controlled border presents our greatest criminal threat.

The Federal Government must be a staunch ally to the States in stopping the crime. The cartels benefit immensely from an unsecured border, and they are not exactly screening for threats to our national security and public safety.

We have reached a critical juncture and must choose who actually controls the southern border, and, consequently, our self-determination and our safety. Violent drug cartels or home security—which is it? The choice directs our future.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, on another matter, today, I speak to my fellow colleagues on the extraordinary courage, bravery, and patriotism that

the men and women in our Armed Forces showed to the entire world, yet again, in the last several months in Afghanistan.

Now, we see plenty of evidence that they were placed in an impossible situation because of the bad judgment and leadership failures of President Biden.

Despite President Biden's bad judgment, our men and women in uniform again exceeded expectations. In the process of doing their job for people whom they don't even know, we lost 13 of our best who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country, and 18 more suffered serious injuries.

I pray—and I assume all Americans pray—for their families for the loss that those families have suffered.

Those 13 young men and women will never, and should never, be forgotten. They are heroes.

This disastrous exit was entirely avoidable, which makes the loss of life even more gut-wrenching.

Intelligent and honest people can disagree on whether the Americans should have left Afghanistan, but it is unthinkable that anyone could justify the manner in which this administration carried out this disaster.

The Biden administration left Americans behind. This is the United States of America. We never leave our people behind. I have heard from many Iowans who are outraged by this moral failure.

When he took office, President Biden arrogantly announced that "America is back." Now the world is seeing America in retreat. The Russians and Red China are crowing over this comedy.

I and others have compared the imagery and the perception to the fall of Saigon. But, remember, in that case, we had pulled our military out before we broke our promises to the South Vietnamese military.

In this case, it appears that crucial support for the Afghan military was withdrawn while we were relying on that same military to hold off the Taliban long enough to complete our withdrawal.

I have been at many briefings related to President Biden's Afghan exit. I have tasked my oversight and policy staff to do the same. Some have been classified briefings; others were not classified. What I can say—and what I believe the American people ought to know—is that this administration couldn't track the state of play on the ground in the way that they should have had the capability to do.

Every briefing gave a more dire and desperate picture than the one briefing we received before. It was obvious that this administration was losing control. Yet it was clear to me and my colleagues that the administration never sufficiently changed its posture in the region as the facts on the ground changed from bad to worse.

When the administration officials were questioned about this strategy, they often publicly responded that what they were doing was based on Presidential-level decisions.

Joe Biden owns this disastrous exit, plain and simple. But, also, Secretary Austin, Secretary Blinken, and General Milley are not without blame.

The exit has realized the worst fears of every Afghan who, over 20 years, learned to dream of peace, and every naysayer who said: Wait, and they will leave. Our enemies were right, and now we have left.

The Biden administration certainly left the women of Afghanistan behind. They are once again being beaten, killed in the streets for supposed crimes, such as daring to speak, wanting an education, not covering their faces, and, in some cases, simply walking in public.

The Biden administration, in its hasty exit, effectively armed the Taliban with advanced American military weaponry that is now being used to oppress the Afghan people. The Taliban is now patrolling our streets in Kabul in American vehicles, wearing American uniforms, and carrying American-made weapons.

Some of the violent terrorists released by the Obama administration are now in political leadership roles in this Taliban regime. Other members of the Taliban leadership have remained on the FBI's most wanted list, and they have been on that list for many years, including one with a \$10 million bounty. Now, if this were a movie script, nobody would believe it.

In addition to the equipment and the funds, it is crucial that we remember the human cost in Afghanistan. We lost 2,461 servicemembers, 18 of whom came from my State of Iowa. We also lost 3,846 contractors, 66,000 American military and police, 1,144 allied servicemembers, 444 aid workers, and 72 journalists. These numbers hit home. They hit deep. And we should never forget them.

These numbers also don't account for the stain on our national reputation for blatantly disregarding the welfare of the Afghan people who fought alongside us to help us accomplish our mission there. Leaving behind allies will have consequences that will affect our ability to build coalitions in the future. It will negatively impact our ability to defeat future enemies.

Looking through the negatives, the heartache and the pain that our country has suffered from this terribly executed exit, I remain hopeful. Where the Biden administration has failed, we have seen veterans and current mem-

bers of our armed services filling the leadership gap. Where our government didn't keep its promise by working together, these veterans and current members of our armed services and the groups associated with them quickly built ad hoc networks to ensure their Afghan brothers-in-arms and their families were able to leave their crumbling country safely.

Americans have been inspired by reports of Operation Pineapple Express, organized by special operations veterans who, without even being asked or without even asking for permission, helped hundreds of Afghan allies and their families to safety.

One of the more inspiring stories from this disastrous exit involved an Afghan family being guided by his former U.S. marine brother to Abbey Gate at the Kabul airport. The Afghan family was instructed by the U.S. Marine veterans to carry signs with them that invoked Marine Corps phrases that our marines at Abbey Gate would understand but the Taliban would not understand.

After several attempts, the marines on the wall saw the signs and were able to retrieve the family and escort them through Abbey Gate only moments before the suicide attack that took the lives of 11 marines, a Navy corpsman, a U.S. soldier, and scores and scores of Afghan civilians.

When the Marine Corps veteran network was eventually able to make contact with the interpreter, he was asked if he and his family were all right. His reply was, "Of course I'm good. I'm with marines."

Now, that is just one story, but this isn't the only amazing story regarding our veterans and our servicemembers. Pictures that were taken during this time show the desperation of the Afghan people: mothers desperately throwing their children to American troops in the hope that even if the parents couldn't reach safety, their children could. These pictures also show the pure hearts of these American warriors whom we honor.

During this 20-year conflict, our service men and women have never wavered in their duty to God and country, consistently showing their ability to annihilate the enemy. They defeated the Taliban, liberated the people of Afghanistan, and protected our country from further terrorist attacks for 20 years.

During their final hours in Kabul, our young warriors did something unimagi-

nable for almost any other country's military: They injected humanity into the dark fringes of a war-torn conflict during a mass evacuation. We have seen the pictures of marines in full battle attire holding crying infants. We have seen our servicemembers giving the shirts off their backs to keep children warm. This stands in contrast to the actions of political leaders thousands of miles away here, where we stand this very day.

Despite the Taliban's most recent acts of barbarism, the Biden administration has begun discussing potential recognition of the Taliban as a government. The possibility of taxpayer-funded foreign aid has been dangled as a carrot to incentivize their good behavior. This is pure naivete on the part of anybody in this administration thinking about that.

The Biden administration's string of foreign policy blunders has created a domino effect that Americans will feel for years to come. Afghanistan could once again become the epicenter for terrorist activities that will launch future attacks on our Nation—hopefully not another 9/11. I pray that my concerns will not become reality, but somehow I have to have fear that they will be reality. At the very least, Americans' credibility on the world stage with our allies, even with our enemies, has taken a huge hit.

In the unfortunate event that our worst fears come to light, my solace is in the knowledge that our service men and women continue to have the strength to overcome the failures of our own political leaders.

So, to my fellow Americans, let us never forget the sacrifices of our men and women in the armed services and the sacrifices that that means for protecting our freedom and security. Their service and sacrifice have been of immeasurable value. All Americans owe a debt to them that can never fully be repaid.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10:15 A.M.
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10:15 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:54 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, September 16, 2021, at 10:15 a.m.